

## Being Part of the Solution

I am sure you have heard many people talk about mental health. There are usually quite a few buzzwords surrounding mental health and it is often talked about with a sense of hopelessness and concern. Although that is important when we talk about mental health issues such as suicide, illnesses, and more, we often leave out the fact that the solution to helping improve some of these issues lies within our own power. Below, I have listed four different ways you can be part of the solution when it comes to mental health.

Number one – Talk about mental health. Talk about it in the small sense and ways like telling someone how you are feeling and what is going on. Talk about it in the big ways and let people around you know that you are indeed a safe place for help. That you can, in fact, be a safe place for them to come to. Bring awareness to the idea that it is okay to struggle, and that it does get better. Talk about mental health.

Number two – Make it normal. As a society, our culture has historically labeled mental issues and illnesses as weird, uncomfortable, and unusual. This needs to be changed. You can make mental health normal by recognizing that mental health issues come from imbalances in our brains caused by trauma, life events, stress, and more. Make mental health normal by not shying away from checking in on friends, talking openly about emotions and stress, and by not judging someone who may be struggling. Just like you would bring a casserole or dinner to someone suffering from a debilitating physical illness, you can make a difference by bringing a casserole or dinner to someone suffering from a debilitating mental illness. You can be part of the solution by making it normal.

Number three – Become Educated. It is common knowledge that diabetes is a disease caused by an inability to properly produce insulin. It is common knowledge that cancer is treated with chemotherapy. It is common knowledge that eating right and regularly exercising can reduce the risk of heart disease. This is all because we have taken the time in school, in our personal lives, and at work, to become educated about these diseases. However, it is less common to know that an over or underproduction of dopamine can cause anxiety and depression. It is less common to know that schizophrenia results from a disruption in neurotransmitters and can be treated with therapy and medication. Becoming educated not only on the risks, the causes, and the treatments but also the signs and symptoms. Take classes, do research, and learn how to better understand what a mental health illness looks like, is caused, and how it can be treated.

Number four – Build connections with others. Connecting with others is an important part of being human. Unlike other species on the earth, a connection is needed for us to survive. We live in families, build friendships, and we have relationships because, without connection, we struggle. A connection can mean many different things to people, but the core of connection is knowing that someone cares about you and having someone you care about. Research has shown and continues to show, that being connected to someone significantly decreases thoughts of suicide, improves mental well-being, and can even improve physical health as well (Seppala, 2020). You can be part of the solution by finding and building connections.

Mental Health can seem like an over-encompassing and overwhelming issue. It can seem impossible to make a difference and make a change, but I am here to tell you that you can do just that. You can be part of the solution, building and helping improve and save lives. Try these four steps and see what happens as you work to be part of the solution.